



PBS to air '*Dust Bowl*' documentary

November 2012

When you hear “dust bowl,” iconic images likely pop into your head: black clouds over the prairie, dead cattle scattered across the range and tractors buried in the field. Those images are easy to remember, but we easily forget the circumstances, economic conditions and the collective human choices that led us to the dust bowl. Ken Burns’ new documentary, *The Dust Bowl*, set to air on PBS on Nov. 18, examines the worst man-made ecological disaster in American history, documenting its causes, impact, and lessons, as well as the personal stories of survival and human endurance.

The documentary chronicles the frenzied wheat boom of the “Great Plow-Up,” followed by a decade-long drought during the 1930s, which nearly swept away the breadbasket of the nation. Vivid interviews, dramatic photographs and seldom seen movie footage, bring to life stories of incredible human suffering and equally incredible human perseverance.

Humans rely on soil to sustain life through production of food, fuel, and fiber. Yet soils are a natural resource often misunderstood. Soil quality, often called soil health, is the capacity to sustain plant and animal productivity, maintain or enhance water quality, and support human health and habitation. Tremendous soil erosion and dramatic decline of soil quality during the dust bowl sparked creation of the Natural Resources Conservation Service and local conservation districts. The lessons learned from the dust bowl are as relevant today as they were in the 1930s. We can build a stronger future for Minnesota by better understanding our relationship to the land that sustains us and partnering to conserve the soil resource.

For more information about the documentary, visit www.pbs.org/kenburns/dustbowl.

Learn more about the dust bowl and soil erosion of the 1930s and today:

- View images from the dust bowl from the [Library of Congress](#)
- Listen to a firsthand account of surviving the dust bowl on [The Story](#)
- Watch video of a [dust storm sweeping across Oklahoma](#) on 10/19/2012



The winds of the "dust bowl" deposited soil drifts against a barn near Liberal, Kansas. Credit: Arthur Rothstein - March 1936